The Livingston County Historical Society



- Henry J. Mies
- 1869-1932

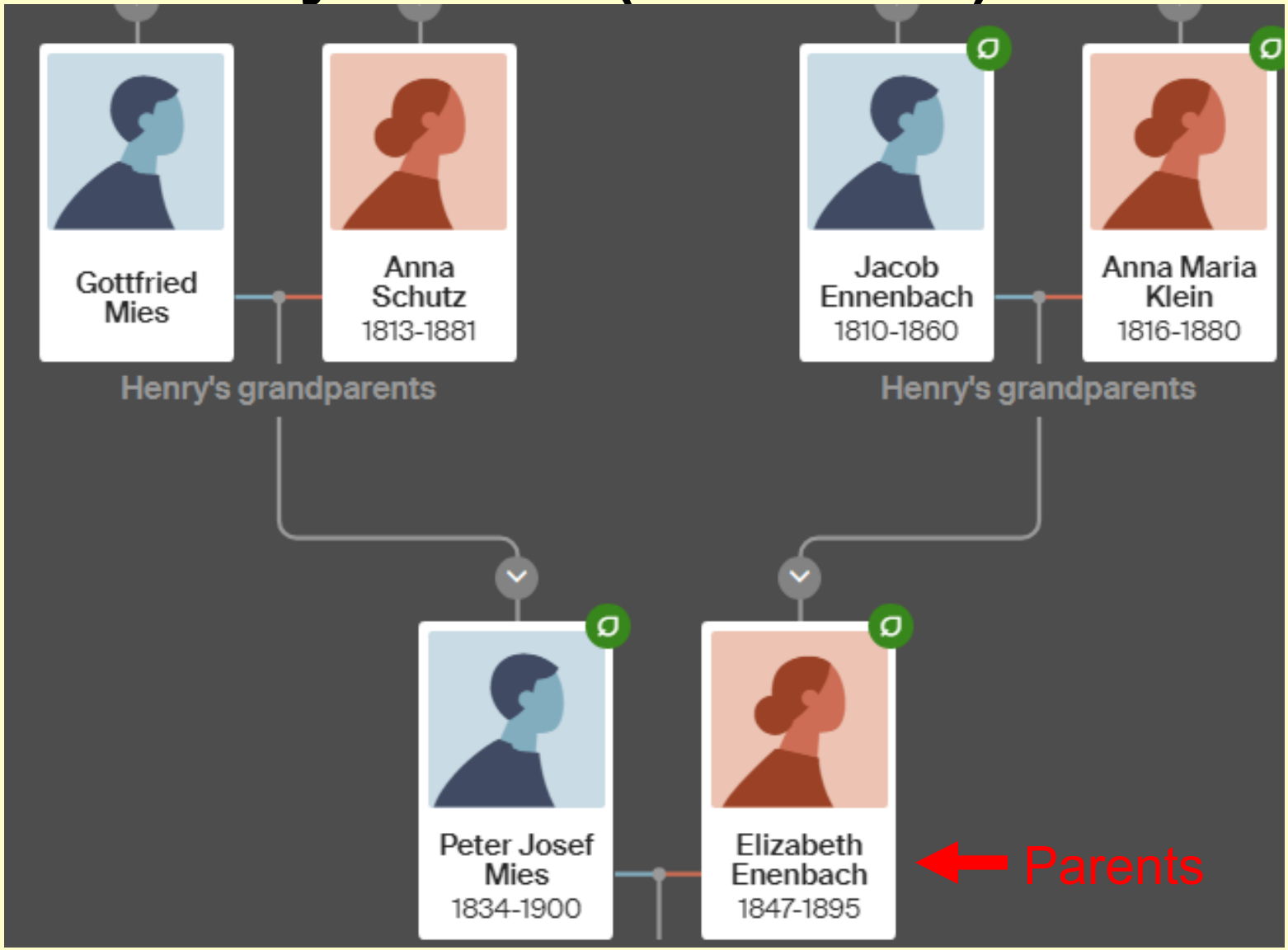
By: Dale C. Maley

Fairbury, Illinois

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

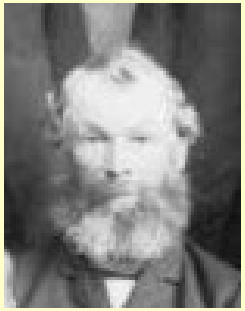
- Father was Joseph Mies (1834-1900)
- Have researched 300+ Livingston County family trees
- Joseph Mies by far most interesting !!

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Henry’s parents and grandparents

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



- Joseph Mies born in 1834 in Germany
- Son of Gottfried and Anna Shutz
- 3rd of 9 children
- Family only had 3 Acres, not enough to support family of 11 people
- Very poor
- Homespun clothing

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- The kitchen table was of heavy oak with a deep bowl-like depression in the center to hold the mixed food.

- Around the edge were smaller depressions, used instead of plates.

- Underneath the table a small strip held the spoons. The food was usually some kind of soup, and many a time the cupboard was low.

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Age 16, started 3 year Carpenter apprenticeship
- 2.5 years as Apprentice then 6 months as Tradesman
- He lived at home, father had to provide wood to practice on.
- Joseph made a long plane as final project
- Carpenter pay too low, father wanted him to work in mines
- Also facing mandatory military service



Example long plane

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Joseph sneaked out of Germany onto a ship bound for America
- In 1854, Joseph arrived in New York harbor, age 20
- Traveled to Chicago, had 10 cents in his pockets
- Made friends with German family living in Mendota, IL
- Got job in Michigan helping cut down pine trees
- Too frail to be lumberjack, sharpened tools for men

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Joseph caught the gold mining “bug”
- Went to New York, but did not have enough money to sail around Cape Horn then to California
- Henry’s plan => Get on ship, go as far as he could go, stop and work to save enough money for rest of trip to California
- Made it to Cape Town, worked 6 months in South African copper mine
- Miners were a very rough and low-class bunch

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Cape Town workers talked about Australian Gold Rush
- Joseph sailed from Cape Town to Melbourne
- Found work helping to build a church
- Tried gold mining but not successful
- Saw sack of corn with Mendota, Illinois on it while in Australia
  -Got homesick for friends back in Mendota, Illinois
- Sailed for 177 days from Australia to San Francisco

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Civil War going on
- Joseph enlisted in California Infantry, but assigned to California, not the battles out East
- After serving 3 years in the Army, he sailed to Isthmus of Panama and walked across to Gulf of Mexico
- Took ship to New York
- Traveled back to Mendota, Illinois (LaSalle County)
- Had German friends in Mendota

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Joseph worked summer on Enenbach family farm
- Also worked as Carpenter
- Joseph liked one of the young Enenbach daughters, Elizabeth ☺



- Traveled to Omaha to help build the Transcontinental Railroad from Omaha to San Francisco
- Railroad boss put him in charge of building all the wood water towers needed by steam locomotives

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Joseph sent for Elizabeth to come Omaha
- They were married in 1867 in Omaha
- Joseph was 32 and Elizabeth was 19 when married
- She helped care for Joseph's tank builder workers that boarded with them
- Had son, Will Mies in Nebraska
- Their son was youngest person present when the Golden Spike was driven in Utah on May 10, 1869

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Driving the Golden Spike in 1869

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Joseph & Elizabeth saved $4,000
- Bought 160 acres near Saunemin
- Tried farming for 1 year in 1873
- Not successful, poor weather and farming inexperience
- Moved back to Mendota and worked on the railroad for 4 years (had 4 children to support)
- Family moved back to Saunemin in 1876
- Still rough time as pioneer farmer

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Clay tiling in 1880s and 2 railroads helped farming
- Successfully raised their 4 children in Saunemin

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Joseph Mies family in 1886 – Henry 2nd from Left

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

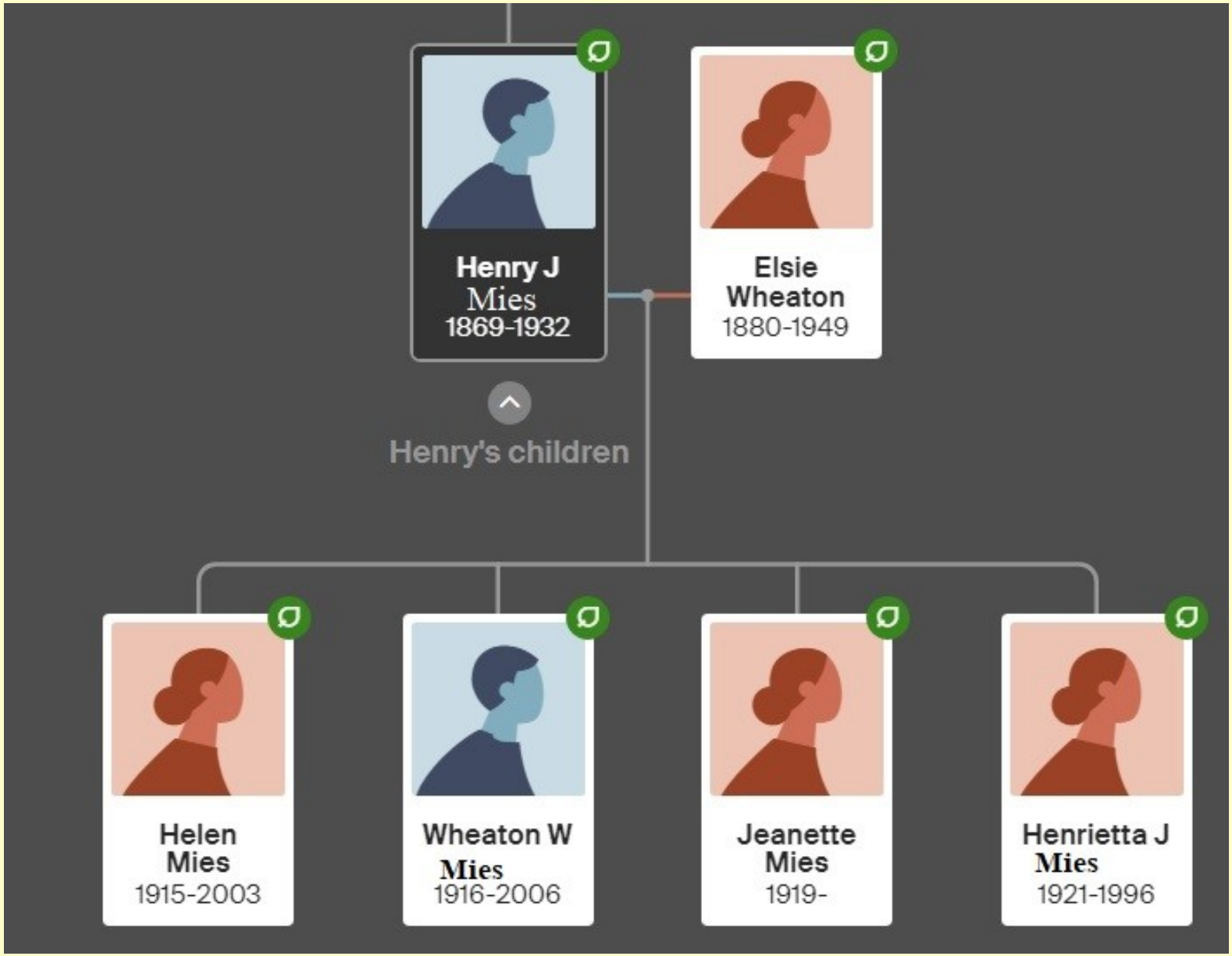
- Joseph's Unique Life
  - Poor family in Germany
  - Learned carpentry in Germany
  - Worked in Michigan pine tree logging operation
  - South African copper miner
  - Australian gold miner and Carpenter
  - Served in Civil War
  - Helped build Transcontinental Railroad
  - Pioneer farmer in Livingston County (Saunemin)

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Henry J. Mies
  - Born in Mendota 1869
  - Married Miss Elsie Wheaton 1909
  - Had 4 children
  - Farmed near Saunemin



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Henry J. Mies Hobbies & Interests
  - Loved history
  - Geology
  - Collecting Native American artifacts
  - Glass plate negative photography



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



- **Historical Society Formation**
  - Gave 1924 speech to Pontiac Kiwanis Club
  - Native American life, habits, and history
  - Mies was a collector and student of Native American relics and lore
  - Kiwanis members were so impressed with his speech that it resulted in the formation of the Livingston County Historical Society in late 1924

KIWANIS CLUB OF PONTIAC, ILLINOIS
KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL
100 YEARS
Founded 1922

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



- **Kiwanis Speech**
  - Speech text still exists
  - Speech was 3,123 words
  - Still a fascinating speech about Native American history 100 years later in 2024 !!
  - Link to speech is on Society website
  - LivCHS.Org

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



- **Mies Iconic Photographs**
  - 1930 was 100th anniversary of first white settlers in Livingston County
  - Valentine and Rachel Darnall
  - Society sponsored celebration at Spence farm south of Fairbury
  - Mies took glass plate negative photography to Event
- Glass plate photography obsolete by 1893, but Mies thought using old equipment would be interesting

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Mies Iconic Photographs**
  - He took iconic panoramic photo of Darnall descendants (Fairbury photographer Dudley Fultz took 1 below)



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Mies Iconic Photographs**

Howard Payne and Marilyn Payne-Wells at Spence Farm by 1930 Plaque made by Livingston County Historical Society.



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Mies Iconic Photographs**
  - Marilyn Payne – Wells only person still alive that was in 1930 photograph
  - She is little girl sitting next to her brother on the ground
  - She is 100 years old !!



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Franklin Oliver connection**
  - He was pioneer settler in 1832 about 3 miles south of Chatsworth



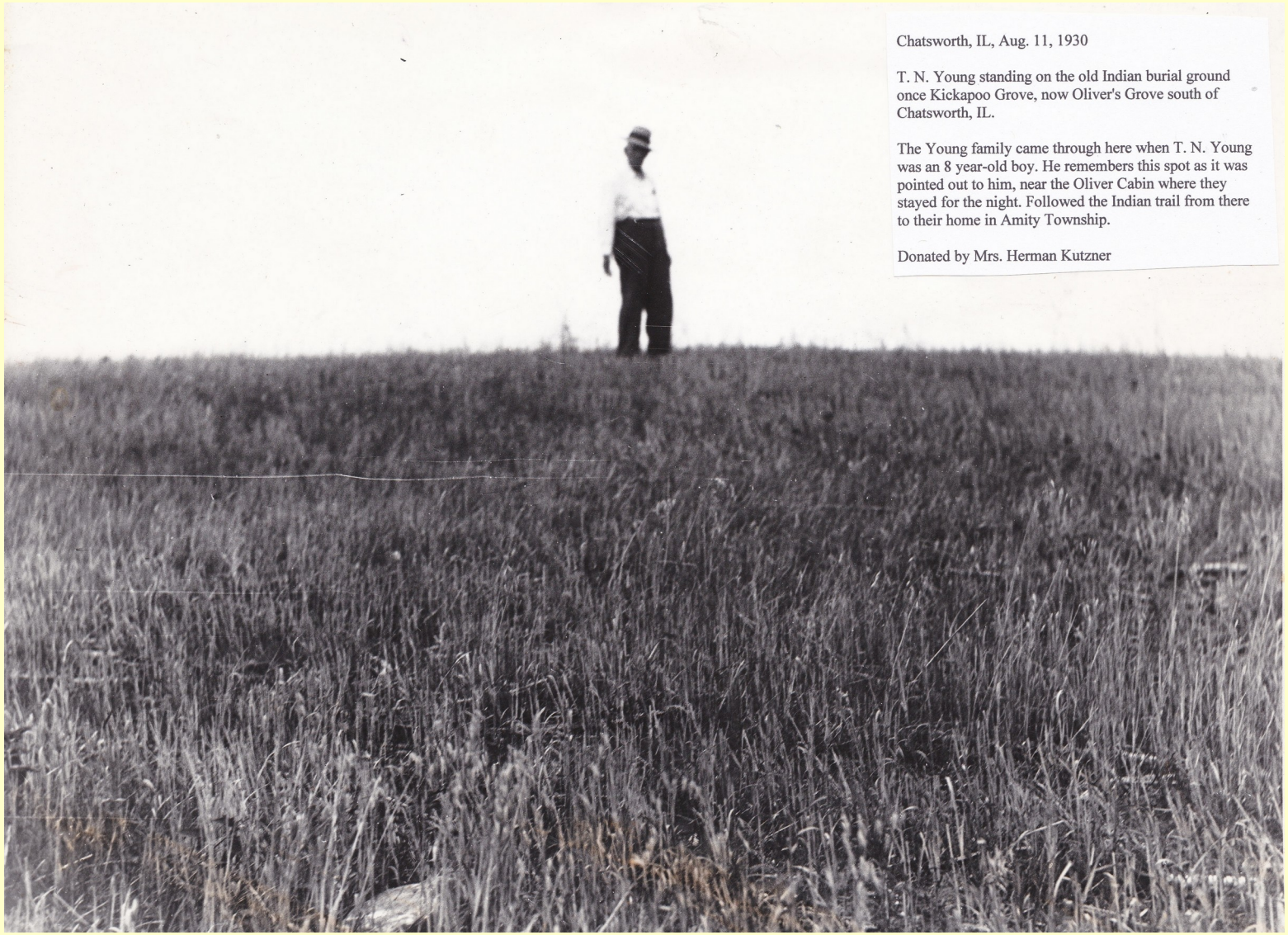
Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Franklin Oliver connection**
  - In 1850, Simon and Barbara Young emigrated from Ohio to Livingston County
  - They rested and spent the night at Franklin Oliver's home 3 miles south of Chatsworth
  - Oliver showed them several area sites:
    - His 1st cabin
    - An Indian burial grounds
    - The Kickapoo corn crib location
    - the old Kickapoo and Potawatomi Trail

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

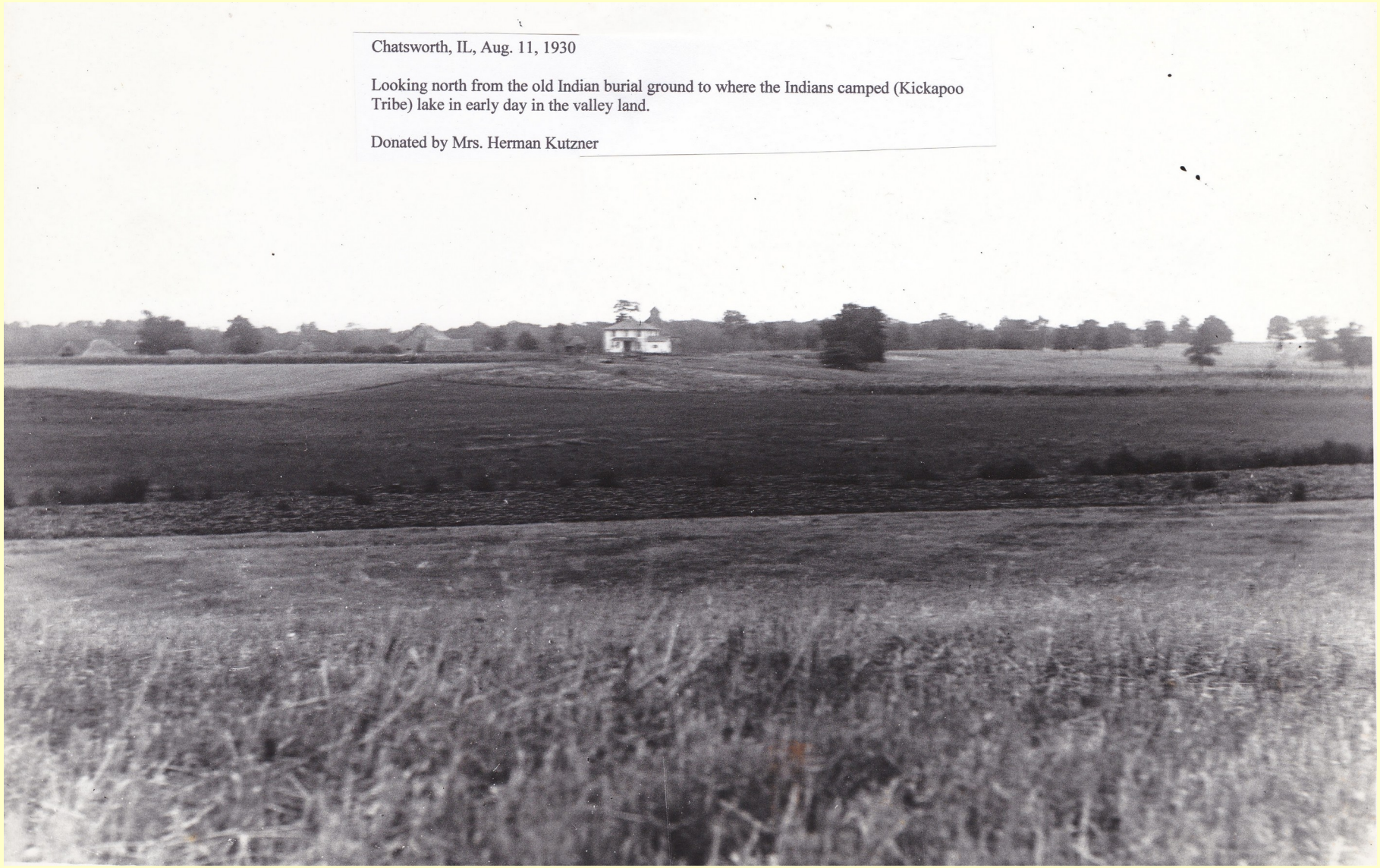
- **Franklin Oliver connection**
  - Tour made life-long impression on 8 year-old T. N. Young
  - 80 years late, in 1930, Thomas N. Young was 87
  - He wanted Henry Mies to photographically document the sites that Oliver showed him 80 years earlier.
  - Mr. Mies took four photographs of Mr. Young illustrating the locations of the sites

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Indian Burial Ground

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Kickapoo Camp and Indian Burial Ground

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Oliver's 1st Cabin location

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Cave and corn crib

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Tragic end for Henry J. Mies**
  - Henry and Elsie in a car around Jacksonville, Illinois in 1932
  - Elsie was serving 3rd term as the President of the Illinois Home Bureau Federation
  - On their way for Elsie to give a speech at Carlinville
  - Henry was 63 years old, Elsie was 52.

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Tragic end for Henry J. Mies**
  - Witnesses reported that that Henry drove his car into the path of an Alton Railroad locomotive
  - The car was demolished and Henry was killed.
  - Elsie survived but suffered fractures of both legs, several broken ribs, severe cuts and bruises.
  - Locomotive was so damaged by collision that it could not return to service until repairs were made.
  - Accident was just 2 years after Henry took iconic photos at Spence farm and Oliver's Crossing.

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

MIES, Charles

THREE LEADERS IN FARM BUREAU TAKEN BY DEATH

The Grim Reaper struck three times last week, taking leaders in Illinois Farm Bureau activities, reports the Illinois Agricultural Association. Charles Mies, former president and long a leader in the Livingston County Farm Bureau, was killed in a railroad crossing accident near his home at Saunemin. Mrs. Mies was seriously injured. Mr. Mies and his wife were riding in an automobile at the time.

The circumstances surrounding his death were almost identical with that of his brother Henry who was killed in a railroad crossing accident several years ago. [Farmers' Weekly Review, 26 May 1937; Sub. by Pam Geyer]

Henry's brother died same way 5 years later !!

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- **Saving the 4 Oliver's Grove Negatives**
  - Henry Mies dies in 1932 => negatives to his son.
  - Son dies => negatives to Carl Hunsicker
  - Carl Hunsicker dies in 1989 =>Descendant boxes up
  - 4 Negatives donated to Roger Kutzner of Historical Society
  - Roger get paper prints made from glass plate negatives

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

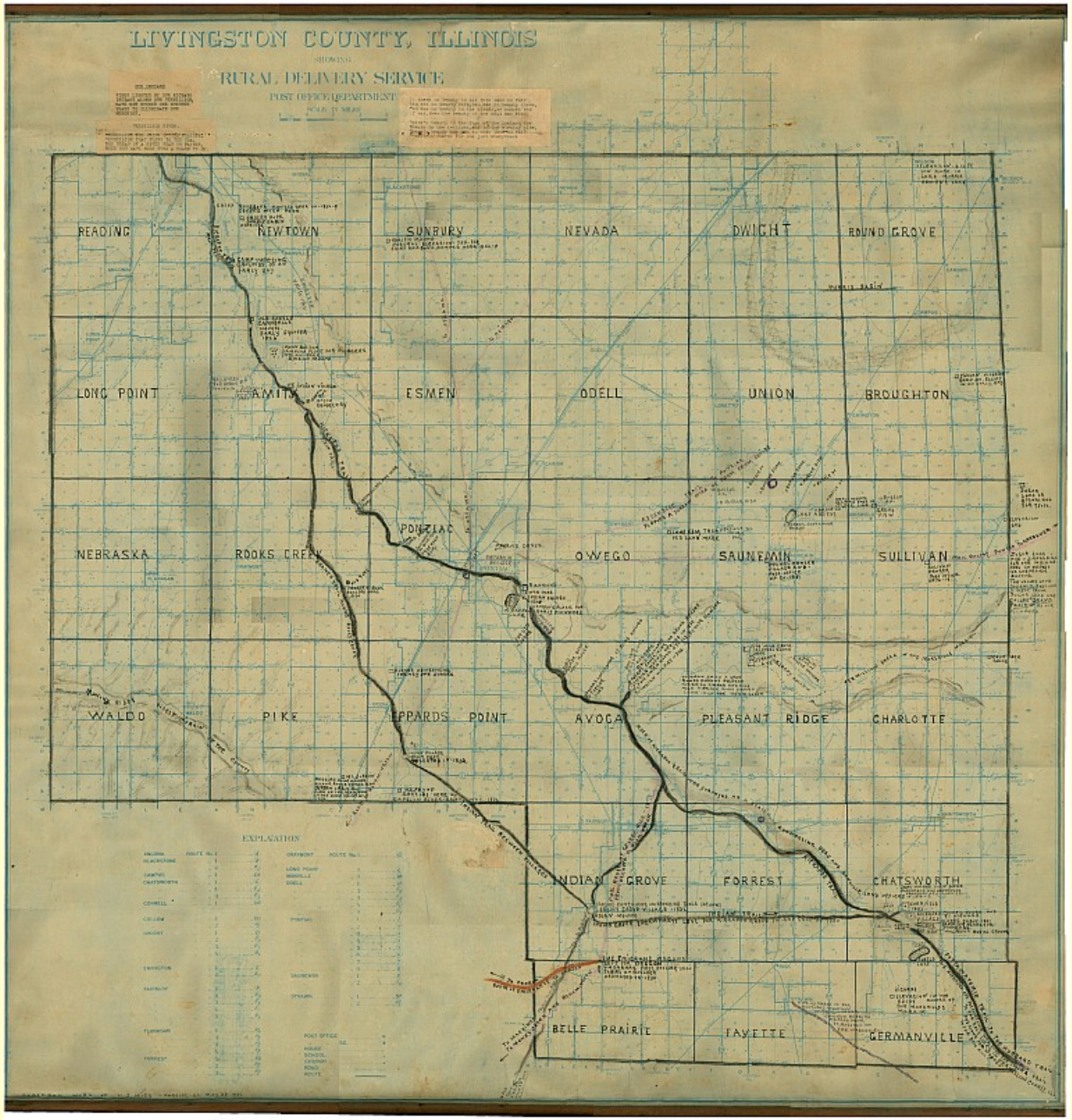
- **Saving the 4 Oliver's Grove Negatives**
  - Paper prints to Dixon Mounds Museum, the Chatsworth Historical Society, and the Livingston County Historical Society.
  - Maley discovers 4 prints in Dungeon Jan 2023
  - Scanned and uploaded to Archive.Org
  - Digital copies to Chatsworth personnel
  - Used to find location of Oliver's 1st cabin ☺

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Example of glass plate negative

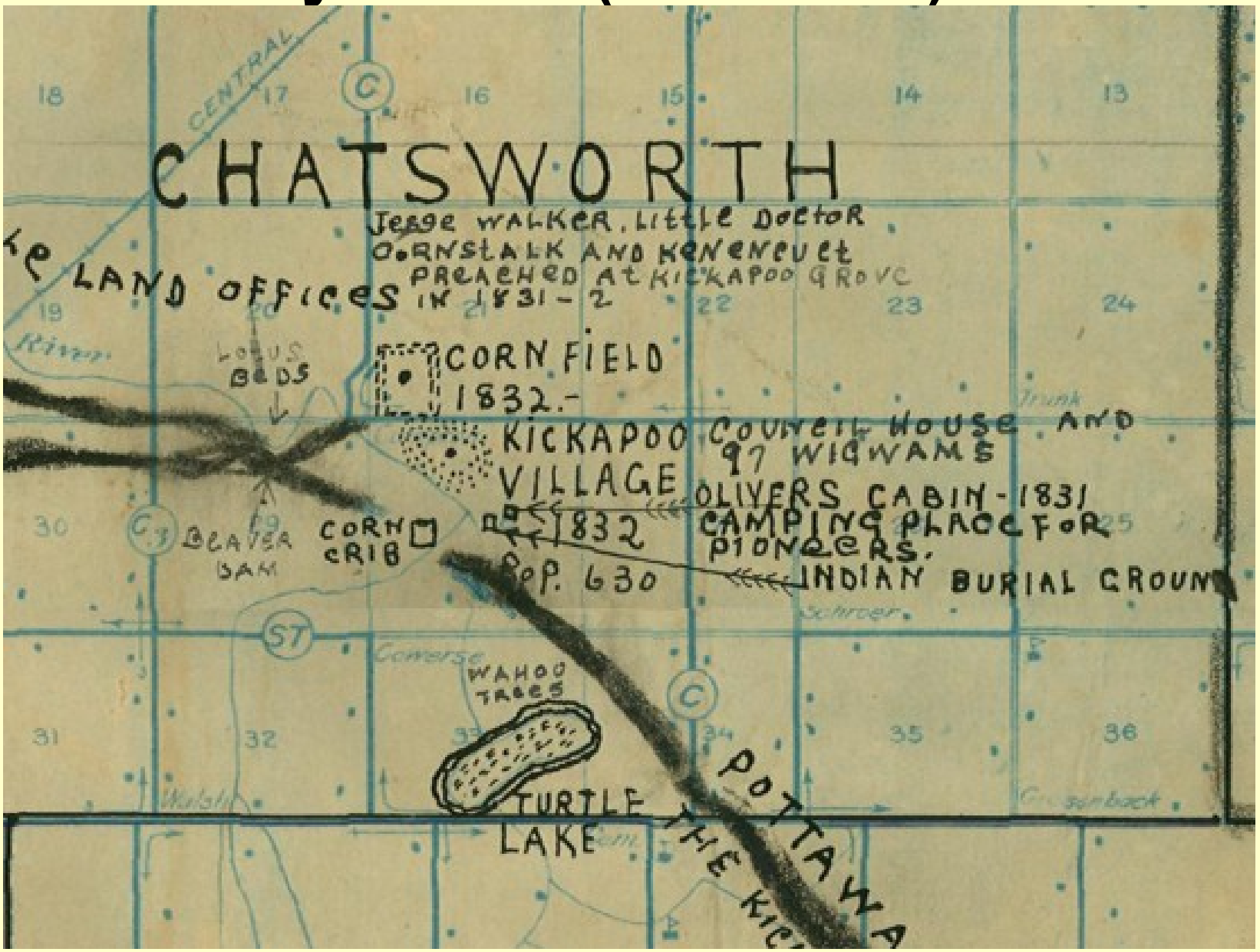
Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



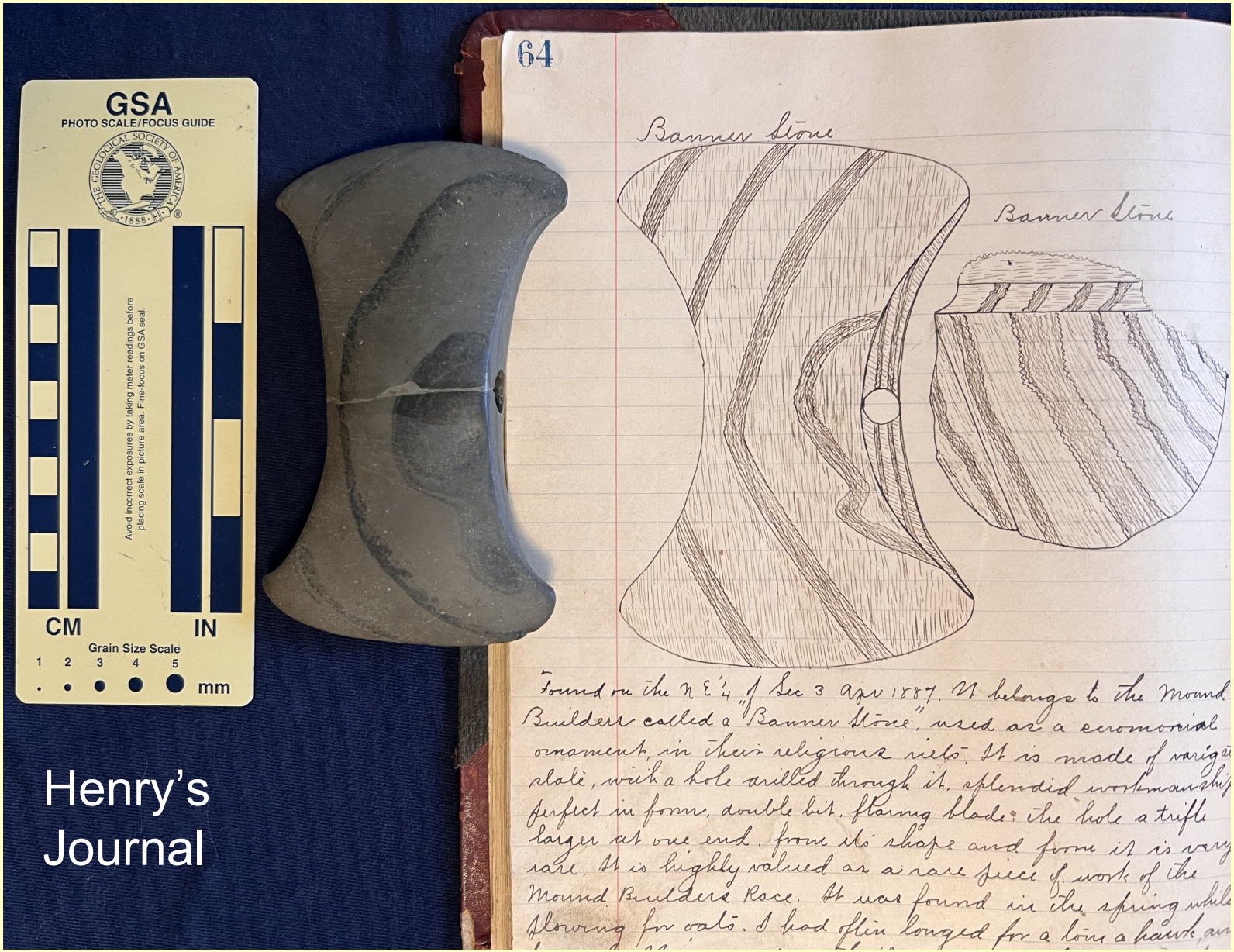
Henry's notes on Livingston County Map

Fascinating Map !!

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



Henry's Journal

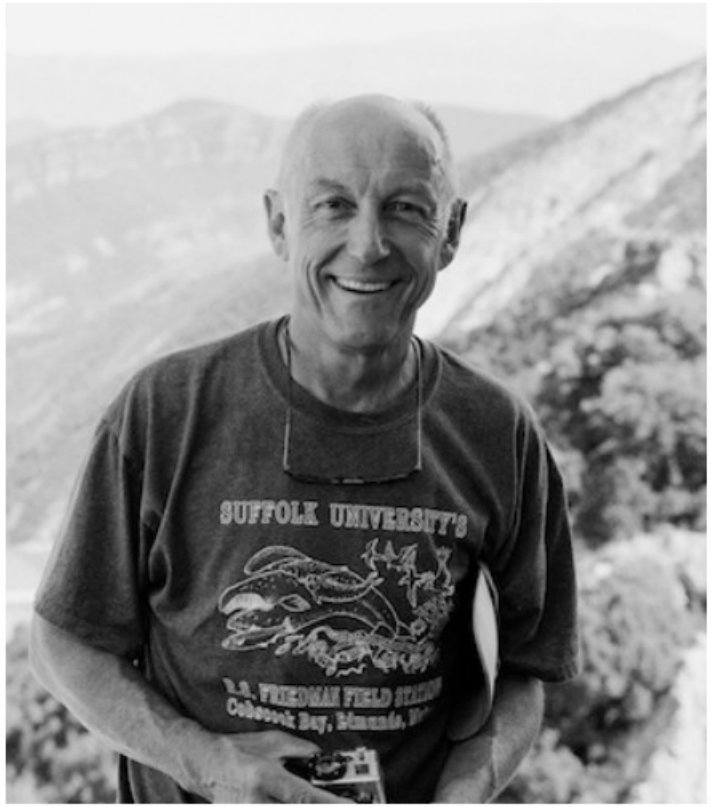
Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

Jonathan W. Mies

Emeritus Professor of Geology
Retired 2023

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Structural Geology
Field Methods
Tectonics
Mineralogy
Petrology
X-ray Diffraction
Seismology



At Castle de Samitier, Spain, with the Mediano anticline as a backdrop

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Contact Information

E-mail: jonwmies@gmail.com

A Grandson of Henry J. Mies.

Has emailed me a lot of rare information.

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)

- Some of the many Legacies of Henry J. Mies:
  - Livingston County Historical Society
  - 4 rare Oliver's Grove glass plate negative photos
  - Many donated items in the Archives (Dungeon)
  - Hand-Drawn Map showing many Native American items
  - Journal with many illustrations of artifacts found in the area
  - 1924 Speech to Kiwanis Club
  - Family history Writings

Henry J. Mies (1869-1932)



www.Archive.Org

175 Rare Documents uploaded by Dale C. Maley

All rare Henry Mies documents uploaded.

Hopefully free access for generations to come.

Summary

- Many thanks go to a Grandson of Henry J. Mies (Professor Jonathan W. Mies) for sharing rare documents
- Henry J. Mies family played important role in Livingston County history
- Thanks to Henry, we have a Historical Society that is celebrating its 100th Birthday ☺



Henry J. Mies

LIVINGSTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY EST. 1924

Questions?